

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
Minutes of the September 28, 2006, Meeting
San Francisco

Justice Carlos R. Moreno, chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 28, 2006, at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in San Francisco.

Commission Members Present: Hon. Carlos R. Moreno (chair), Ms. Mary Ault, Hon. Richard C. Blake, Mr. Lawrence B. Bolton, Mr. Curtis L. Child, Ms. Miryam J. Choca, Mr. Joseph W. Cotchett, Mr. Michael Cunningham, Hon. Kathryn Doi Todd, Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, Hon. Leonard P. Edwards (Ret.), Mr. Raul A. Escatel, Ms. Deborah Escobedo, Hon. Terry B. Friedman, Hon. Richard D. Huffman, Ms. Miriam Aroni Krinsky, Mr. Will Lightbourne, Ms. Donna C. Myrow, Hon. Michael Nash, Mr. David Neilsen, Ms. Diane Nunn, Mr. Ken Patterson, Mr. Derek Peake, Ms. Linda Penner, Mr. Anthony Pico, Ms. Pat Reynolds-Harris, Ms. Jennifer Rodriguez, Mr. Gary C. Seiser, Mr. Alan Slater, and Hon. Dean T. Stout.

Commission Members Not Present: Hon. Michael D. Antonovich, Hon. Karen Bass, Hon. John Burton (ex officio), Ms. Karen J. Dotson, Hon. Susan D. Huguenor, Ms. Teri Kook, Ms. Amy Lemley, Ms. Maria D. Robles, Mr. Joseph L. Spaeth, Hon. Todd Spitzer, and Hon. Darrell S. Steinberg.

Commission and AOC Staff: Mr. Christopher Wu (lead), Ms. Jaden Alexander, Ms. Mara Bernstein, Ms. Carolynn Castaneda, Ms. Charlene Depner, Ms. Sidney Hollar, Ms. Kathleen Kane, Mr. David Meyers, Mr. Lee Morhar, Ms. Chantal Sampogna, Ms. Sonya Tafoya, Ms. Renee Wessels (consultant), Mr. Don Will, and Ms. Leah Wilson.

Others Present: Ms. Sue Diedrich, Ms. Jessica Gunderson, Ms. Nancy Kahn, Ms. Linda Katz, Ms. Jennifer Kelleher, Ms. Tracy Kenny, Dr. Barbara Needell, Ms. Anahita Savarnejad, Mr. Kevin Thurber, Ms. Leslie Heimov (by phone conference), and Ms. Aimee Steele.

Item 1 Welcome and Acceptance of the June 15 Meeting Minutes
Commission Activities

Justice Moreno and Mr. Wu welcomed commission members to the third commission meeting. Mr. Wu announced new commissioners: Ms. Karen J. Dotson, consultant from the California Department of Education, and Ms. Amy Lemley, policy director of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. Senator John Burton remains as an ex-officio member, and Dr. David Sanders is no longer on the commission due to his new position as Executive Vice President of Systems Improvement at Casey Family Programs in Seattle. Ms. Renee Wessels, communications specialist and consultant to the commission, was reintroduced.

Item 2 Overview of the Operational Framework for the Commission and Discussion of Commission Values and Principles

Justice Carlos R. Moreno presented an overview for discussion on the charge of the commission and desired outcomes, values, and principles that the commission would like to achieve.

Justice Moreno detailed commission-related activities. At the first meeting in March 2006, an overview of foster care was provided. In June 2006, there was a briefing on federal financing and subcommittees met for the first time. In the interim, there have been various conferences: June 5, Youth Summit at Occidental College; August 7, California Youth Connection Policy Summit in Oakland; and September 22 Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care Planning Conference in Sacramento, where Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed eight foster care-related bills.

Justice Moreno expressed the importance of clarity, focus, and efficiency for the 41 commissioners to come to consensus on recommendations.

Justice Moreno explained the grounds on which the commission was created and the charge and goals it is to meet. The Judicial Council is the authorizing body that brought together the commission. The charge is to improve safety, permanency, well-being, and fairness outcomes for children and families in California's court systems and foster care. The commission shall provide the Judicial Council with recommendations on how to achieve those things. Safety, permanency, and well-being are three outcomes that can be measured for improvement. Fairness must coexist on all levels. Exploring funding and resource options, and collaborating with courts and partners are effective ways to achieve improvement in outcomes.

- The first commission outcome is for recommendations to be politically viable so they are practical and survive politically. An implementation plan that will put recommendations into action, including milestones for monitoring and measuring progress, will be developed.
- A second outcome is to improve court performance and accountability by identifying what is needed and making systemic changes. There should be greater transparency in court operations, increased accountability and uniformity, and greater involvement by and understanding of children and families.
- A third outcome is improved collaboration and communication between courts and other agencies, the counties, and the state. In March 2008, local commissions are due to be launched in the 58 counties.
- A fourth outcome is increased awareness and flexible funding. Subcommittees have been established to make recommendations to achieve these outcomes.

Mr. Wu shared both the commission workplan and proposed responsibilities for the various roles that the commission will play. Ms. Wessels touched on the work in progress in developing and implementing a public education plan for the commission.

Item 3 Legislative Update

Ms. Jessica Gunderson from the office of Assembly Member Bass provided a summary of key legislative efforts on foster care and highlighted the signing of foster care bills at the September 22 Assembly Select Committee on Foster Care Planning Meeting in Sacramento.

**Item 4 Subcommittee Meetings and Report Back From Subcommittee Chairs
Submission of Data Resolution to Commission and Vote**

The commission broke into its respective subcommittees. The subcommittees discussed the priorities for their work, including identifying issues, discussing major topic areas, coming up with recommendations, and planning next steps. Chairs of the subcommittees reported back with discussion topics.

BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
Minutes of the September 29, 2006, Meeting
San Francisco

Justice Carlos R. Moreno, chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, September 29, 2006, at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in San Francisco.

Commission Members Present: Hon. Carlos R. Moreno (chair), Hon. Richard C. Blake, Mr. Lawrence B. Bolton, Mr. Curtis L. Child, Mr. Michael Cunningham, Hon. Kathryn Doi Todd, Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, Hon. Leonard P. Edwards (Ret.), Mr. Raul A. Escatel, Ms. Deborah Escobedo, Hon. Terry B. Friedman, Hon. Richard D. Huffman, Ms. Teri Kook, Ms. Miriam Aroni Krinsky, Mr. Will Lightbourne, Ms. Donna C. Myrow, Hon. Michael Nash, Mr. David Neilsen, Mr. Derek Peake, Ms. Linda Penner, Mr. Anthony Pico, Ms. Jennifer Rodriguez, Mr. Gary C. Seiser, Mr. Alan Slater, and Hon. Dean T. Stout.

Commission Members Not Present: Hon. Michael D. Antonovich, Ms. Mary Ault, Hon. Karen Bass, Hon. John Burton (ex officio), Ms. Miryam J. Choca, Mr. Joseph W. Cotchett, Ms. Karen J. Dotson, Hon. Susan D. Huguenor, Ms. Amy Lemley, Ms. Pat Reynolds-Harris, Ms. Diane Nunn, Mr. Ken Patterson, Ms. Maria D. Robles, Mr. Joseph L. Spaeth, Hon. Todd Spitzer, and Hon. Darrell S. Steinberg.

Commission and AOC Staff: Mr. Christopher Wu (lead), Ms. Jaden Alexander, Ms. Mara Bernstein, Ms. Carolynn Castaneda, Ms. Charlene Depner, Ms. Sidney Hollar, Ms. Kathleen Kane, Mr. David Meyers, Mr. Lee Morhar, Ms. Chantal Sampogna, Ms. Sonya Tafoya, Ms. Renee Wessels (consultant), Mr. Don Will, and Ms. Leah Wilson.

Others Present: Ms. Sue Diedrich, Ms. Jessica Gunderson, Ms. Nancy Kahn, and Ms. Linda Katz.

Item Site Visit to San Francisco Unified Family Court and Juvenile Court

The commission took a walking tour of the San Francisco Unified Family Court and Juvenile Court and had an open discussion with Supervising Judge Donna Hitchens and court staff.

Item Reflections on Site Visit

Commissioners discussed ways to improve outcomes and what are “best practices”: reducing caseloads, hearing and incorporating the child in the process, translations for non-English speakers, resources for juvenile dependency courts, court time per case, consider who’s involved, political viability, trust in the system, and court transparency.

Item Overview of the Dependency Process

Commissioner Gary C. Seiser gave a presentation to explain the dependency process with the goal of “a safe, stable, permanent home” at the end of the railroad track.

Item Perspective on California Dependency Cases

Commissioner Richard C. Blake of the Hoopa Valley Tribal Court described his court in Humboldt County. In 1974, it was developed to handle fishing violation cases. Now they hear civil, dependency, and environmental matters. As the only Hoopa judge, he hears about 20 to 70 cases a day. Areas that need improvement are communication with state social services, tracking native children in the foster care system, and translations. Commissioner Blake described how his small community is different from a big city—he shops at the same single store as everyone else and runs on the same track.

Item Introduction of Child Welfare Checklist

Ms. Chantal Sampogna, attorney for the AOC Center for Families, Children & the Courts, discussed a quick reference guide titled, “Every Child, Every Hearing: How to Ensure the Daily Well-Being of Children in Foster Care by Enforcing Their Rights.” The sections are Meeting the Child; Initial or Detention Hearing; Individual Rights; Physical Health; Relationships and Transitions; Emotional Health; and Cognitive Development and Education. Commissioners asked questions and made suggestions for changes before the pamphlet is printed and distributed statewide.

Item Administrative and Future Business

Justice Moreno thanked the commission members and AOC staff for their dedication and hard work. It has been a tremendous learning experience for all—learning about the complexities of financing, best practices, and outcomes. The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.